



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Don't Let Fleas Become FAD

It's hard to imagine that an insect the size of a pencil point can cause cats to continually scratch, itch, and lick to the point of self-mutilation. Cats exhibiting such behavior could be victims of FAD — *flea allergy dermatitis*. Cats can develop an allergic reaction or sensitivity to the flea's saliva which is injected into the skin when the flea bites. The severity of the allergy can vary, but it's possible that one flea bite can produce itching and scratching for 96 hours. This reaction can be treated by using cortisone and antihistamine medications. However, treating the symptom will not cure the problem. The real key to controlling FAD is to eradicate the fleas in the environment and on the cat.

There are a variety of products on the market which can be used on the animal (flea dips, shampoos, powders, sprays, collars and systemic products) and in the environment (bombs, foggers, sprays and dusts) to control fleas. Whatever product(s) you choose to use, it should be formulated specifically for cats. Many pesticides used for dogs and livestock are extremely toxic to cats.

If your cat is badly infested with fleas, it may be advisable to quickly kill the fleas by first using a flea shampoo. Because the residual effect lasts only a few days, the bathing should be followed by cautiously applying a flea dip or flea powder.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 1990.



Flea collars do not kill fleas already on the cat, but serve more as a deterrent to keep fleas off the cat. A rash around the neck (contact dermatitis) can result if the cat is sensitive to the chemicals in the flea collar. *Do not use flea collars on kittens younger than three months old, nursing queens, sick cats, or cats that are sensitive to the collars.*

Eliminating fleas on your cat is important, but even more important is to destroy them in the cat's environment. Daily vacuuming of floors, carpets, and upholstered furniture will remove flea eggs and larva. Adding flea powder or part of a flea collar to the vacuum bag will prevent the eggs and larva from developing into adult fleas.

Remember to carefully read the instructions on all pesticide products before application. *A pesticide improperly applied can be hazardous to you and your cat.*

Flea Facts

- ◆ Adult fleas can lay 40 to 50 eggs a day.
- ◆ 90% of the flea's life cycle is spent in the environment; not on the cat.
- ◆ Fleas are blood-sucking parasites that can cause anemia in their victims.
- ◆ Fleas are the intermediate host for the cat tapeworm.

Warning! Summer Heat Wave

Cats are very intolerant of high environmental temperatures. A cat's only defenses against high temperatures are rapid breathing, panting and licking its fur. If a cat breathes air that is hotter than its body temperature, heat stroke (hyperthermia) is inevitable. A car parked in the sun, restriction to a concrete run without shade, or confinement to a poorly ventilated cat carrier can easily become death-traps for a cat. Short-nosed cats (i.e., Persian), asthmatic cats, and overweight cats are especially susceptible to heat stroke.

On a hot, summer day if your cat suddenly begins rapid breathing, panting, salivating and/or vomiting, your cat may be on the verge of a heat stroke.

You can treat a mild case of heat stroke by immersing the cat in cool water or wrapping it in cool, wet towels to reduce its body temperature. However, if the cat shows signs of weakness or torridness, take it to your veterinarian for *immediate* treatment.

You can prevent your cat from becoming a heat stroke victim by providing adequate ventilation and supplying plenty of fresh drinking water. Never leave your cat in an enclosed vehicle parked in the sun. Long-haired, matted cats will dissipate body heat better if they are clipped for the summer months. Remember, you can tolerate heat better than your cat, so if it is hot for you it is far worse for your cat.

Lyme Disease Poses Health Threat

Lyme Disease is a serious health threat for humans and their pets. The disease is caused by a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is carried primarily by the deer tick in the Northeast and the black-legged California tick in the West. The rapid spread of Lyme Disease is currently attributed to white-tailed deer which may be spreading tick populations.

There have been undocumented reports of Lyme Disease in cats. Fever, loss of appetite, and joint-limb disorders have been observed in those affected cats. In humans the first sign is usually a skin rash, with possible neurologic, cardiac and arthritic problems developing later. Lyme Disease is treatable with antibiotics; however, it first must be diagnosed. Diagnosis is based on serotiters to *B. burgdorferi* and clinical signs.

Preventative measures consist of properly using pesticides in the environment and on pets. Ask your veterinarian about recommended usage of pesticides. Never combine methods of tick control (i.e., dips, powders, sprays or collars) without first checking with your veterinarian.



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